

XXXII

Introduction

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shaped iron instrument. The hole is made by holding the sharpened point of the iron on the piece of shell and rapidly revolving it between the palms of the hand. The pierced pieces are then rounded by crushing the edges against a stone with a cow's hoof.

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Skins for wearing apparel, such as the hides of calves, goats, gazelles and other small animals are usually prepared by drying them first and dressing, then curing in ashes. After this they are stretched tight on poles stuck in the ground, and grease or oil is rubbed on them; then they are rubbed and worked for several hours, till they are soft, and the oil well worked into them. The hair is left on; a skin with a large amount of the hair gone would be considered very poor. The skin is worn with the hair on the outside.

283

Ropes are made from plant fibres, grass, and the leaves of the *dom palm*.

501

BOATS

Canoes are hollowed out of trees; this is, considering the poor tools they have, a very tiresome work, but the boats they make are fairly well; they are propelled by means of long sticks. A peculiar kind of boat or raft is made of the ambach tree; it is composed of a thick bundle of that pith-like, light cane tied together, turned up at the bows, and propelled by a paddle. These boats are so light that they are easily carried by one man.

[482]

MUSICAL
INSTRUMENTS

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Their musical instruments are small and large drums, a stringed instrument called *gom* and a wind instrument consisting in a cow's or antelope's horn; this is used in wars and in war-dances. The drums are logs of wood hollowed out and braced with skin; they are beaten either with the flat hand or with a stick. The *gom* is made by splitting in the middle a small section of a log and hollowing out the flat side a little. A piece of raw cow hide is stretched wet over this, and the flat side becomes the face of the instrument. A round stick some 18 inches long is fastened at each end. The ends of these two upright pieces pass through a cross-stick, which is large enough in diameter to allow them to pass this and still be quite strong. The holes are made in it by burning. The strings are made of tendons of animals or of the root bark of a certain plant. These are attached to the head, drawn across the face over a small wooden bridge, and wound about the cross-stick. They are then tightened, and the instrument is tuned by wetting these strings and tightening or loosening them about the crosspiece. They are tied to this stick, and by winding over themselves, keep from slipping.

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POTTERY

[462]

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Pottery is the handicraft of women. They make pots of different kind and size, for carrying water, cooking, brewing beer; they also make pitchers, cups for drinking beer, heads for smoking pipes, etc. Gourds and calabashes are also much used household tools. The pipe-heads are made of clay; they are large and rather clumsy, and are generally ornamented with some simple designs,

CHAPTER IV

SHILLUK LIFE

THE Shilluk country is for the most part flat, low-lying ¹³³
 grass-land. The river by constant pressure frequently
 breaks through its containing banks and, sweeping away
 the soft soil, inundates the land lying behind them. Since
 nothing is done to repair the broken banks, these inun-
 dations increase each year as with the rise of the Nile
 the waters creep ever further inland, receding only slowly
 with the fall of the flood waters. As a consequence of this, ³⁶¹
 Shilluk villages are usually built well back from the river,
 at least half a mile from the highest point of the flood.
 Usually, too, they are built along the main road passing ^[491]
 from Kaka to Tonga. In some areas, particularly in the
 Detwok-Kodok locality, villages can be found several miles
 inland, even up to as much as fourteen miles. In such places ³¹²
 the people depend for their water supplies on the scum-
 covered water holes dug here and there. Naturally, under
 conditions like this personal hygiene is somewhat at a dis-
 count, and social or parochial calls present their own
 problems. During the dry season the Nile is the only source
 of water for most villages, even those situated miles away
 from the river. At Detwok, for instance, it is a common ^[512]
 sight to see the women of Aguno trudging past the mission
 at six o'clock in the morning, having already walked five
 miles. In half an hour or so they will be on their way back ^[482]
 balancing their full water-pots on their heads. They cannot
 reach their homes again before nine o'clock when they will ^[512]
 have to set to work to grind millet and prepare the morning
 meal. If they are careful with the water it may last for two
 days, but then they will have to pick up the large earthen-
 ware pots and take the hated road to the Nile more than
 five miles off. Once when I happened to be passing through ^[281]

3/2 Aguno I stopped to watch a couple of men stretching and
 [28] scraping a cow hide. One of them called to a girl in the
 village, his wife or sister, to bring him some water to soften
 the skin. With great reluctance she brought a large bowlful
 and stood by, while with lavish hand the man splashed the
 precious water on skin and ground indiscriminately. He then
 demanded more and I thought, and hoped, that she would
 refuse; that she would remind him that she had walked
 eleven burning miles to bring the water that he threw away so
 thoughtlessly. After a moment's hesitation, however, she
 picked up the bowl he had thrown at her feet and turned
 slowly towards the hut, but as she did so I saw two tears over-
 flow from her brimming eyes and roll down her cheeks. Such
 [52] drudgery is forced on these womenfolk by circumstance and
 custom, and we can only wish that things were in some way
 bettered.

361 But now let us proceed and see what a Shilluk village is
 [48] like. We enter it along a little path which leads from the
 main road and passes through the dried up, yellow stubble
 of last season's millet plantation.

Passing through the space between the fences of two
 [36] neighbouring homesteads, we come upon a large level
 [53] circle of bare ground which is the playground of the village
 and its dancing floor. Sometimes it boasts a tree, green and
 leafy in contrast to its dun, dusty surroundings, under the
 refreshing shade of which the village elders gather to discuss
 [52] the affairs of their little world: the price of cattle, the failure
 of the harvest, the prospect of the fishing. Under the tree, too,
 or at the further side of the dancing floor, are two large
 [53] forked stakes driven into the ground to hold the drums.
 Around this circular central space the family dwellings are
 grouped.

[62] Villages vary in size, from the small hamlet consisting of
 two or three homesteads to a large settlement of sixty or
 seventy. An average-sized village contains about thirty
 families. All, however, are set up on the same plan, and the
 houses are built according to the same pattern. Each house-
 hold consists of two houses set facing one another in a small